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Acreage-marketing guides for vegetable growers



*balance supplies
with demand*

Acreage-marketing guides for vegetables, including potatoes and sweetpotatoes, are announced each year by the U. S. Department of Agriculture to aid growers in the development of their planting plans for the different seasons.

This program is an attempt to provide the best possible estimates of the acreage of particular vegetables required, with average yields, to supply the quantity of these vegetables deemed necessary to meet the market needs anticipated for the coming season. The program is directed toward balancing the supply of each vegetable with the demand for it. Compliance on the part of growers is voluntary. When growers have kept acreage within the levels recommended by the Department, few marketing difficulties have been encountered.

Guides developed seasonally

The acreage-marketing guides for vegetables are

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developed seasonally, before planting time, for vegetables for fresh market and for processing. The guides are published as follows:

- For winter season crops, in August.
- For spring crops, in October or November.
- For summer and fall crops and for processing vegetables, in late January or early February.

Preparation for the guide reports is a continuing operation in which specialists follow the market for the various commodities closely throughout the year and develop a record of happenings in the various markets, with explanations for unusual occurrences.

Economic forecasts are considered

Immediately before the preparation of specific recommendations, the latest and best available information about the particular commodities is drawn together and considered along with forecasts of economic conditions provided by agricultural economists of the Department. In addition, information concerning the stocks and rates of disappearance of canned and frozen vegetables is obtained. On the basis of this information, the specific recommendations are developed, and a brief report is prepared explaining the reasons for each recommendation. Recognition is given to trends and events of the last few years, as well as those of a longer period of time. The specialists developing the recommendations for a particular commodity consider carefully the abnormalities of the preceding seasons, but the recommendations are based upon the assumption that average conditions will prevail in the following season. The recommendation for each commodity is presented in terms of a percentage change from the acreage and production for preceding years, so as to permit each individual grower to apply this percentage-change recommendation to his individual operations. The recommendations are reviewed before publication by representatives of various agencies of the Department of Agriculture.

Basis for intelligent planning

The guide program is an attempt to develop for the vegetable industry the kind of basic planning that every big and successful industry undertakes in the development of production and marketing programs for a year ahead. The grower is provided not only with the specialists' recommendation, but also with the latest possible information upon which the recommendation is based. The information is presented to the grower in sufficient time for him to consider the facts as he develops his plans for the forthcoming season.

The fundamental concept behind the guide program is that, given the best information possible, the grower will make intelligent decisions for his and the industry's best interests. The service is performed for growers in this way because few growers have the facility for undertaking this type of analysis themselves.

Compliance is voluntary

While compliance with the guides is voluntary, it is the policy of the Department to limit surplus removal assistance for potatoes and other vegetables to those areas where there has been substantial compliance with the acreage guides. However, compliance with the guides program does not commit the Department to provide assistance for any commodity or area. The acreage guides are believed to be a means by which much of the gamble that is inherent in this industry may be removed and by which growers can contribute to stability of prices and production. The program is intended to aid growers in balancing supplies with the demand for their production; that is, to gear production to the volume that can be marketed successfully.

Educational work needed

In order for the marketing information and recommendations included in the guides to be used most effectively they must be disseminated and discussed as a part of the agricultural educational work carried

on in all of the most important vegetable and potato States and counties. Therefore, the dissemination and educational phases of the guides program is carried out by cooperative work of the Extension Service and the Fruit and Vegetable Division of AMS.

This statement was prepared by the Fruit and Vegetable Division of the Agricultural Marketing Service to answer numerous inquiries about the basis for and operation of the acreage-marketing guides for vegetables.

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